

EDITED BY MORAG MACLACHLAN

THE FORT LANGLEY JOURNALS,  
1827-30

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY WAYNE SUTTLES

This is Exhibit "H" referred to in the  
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this 2 day of DECEMBER 20 09  
[Signature]  
A Commissioner for taking Affidavits  
Within British Columbia



UBC PRESS / VANCOUVER



*Respectfully*  
*John McLoughlin*

Chief Factor John McLoughlin  
Though he had serious reservations about the suitability of the Fraser  
as a transport route from New Caledonia, Chief Factor John McLoughlin  
obeyed orders and sent the expedition to found Fort Langley.

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# JOURNAL KEPT BY GEORGE BARNSTON, 1827-8

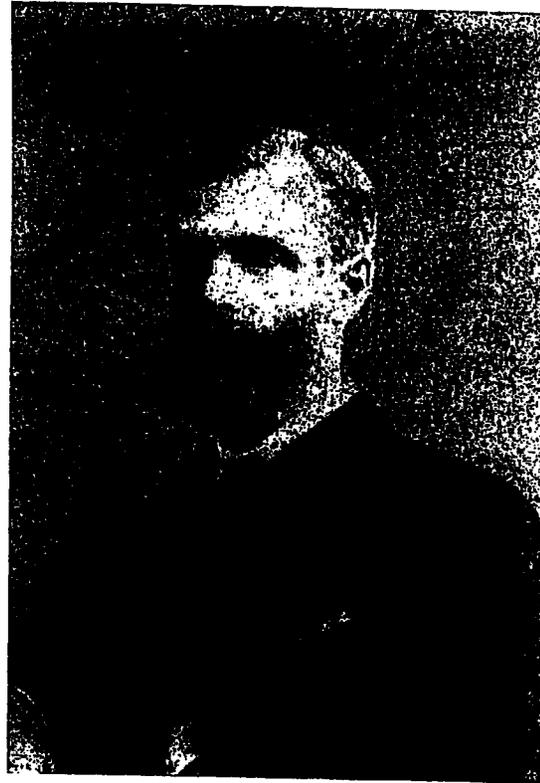


## GEORGE BARNSTON

George Barnston, who kept this journal, was born in Edinburgh about 1800. He joined the North West Company in 1820 and was retained by the Hudson's Bay Company after the union. A.C. Anderson described him "as a man of great energy of character, of high education, and universally esteemed" (Anderson 1878:33). Probably because of his training as a surveyor and army engineer, Barnston was sent to the Columbia District to assist Aemilius Simpson with survey work on the Pacific coast. No doubt his skills were also useful in laying out the establishment at Fort Langley.

At the time of Barnston's death in Montreal in 1883, many tributes of love and respect were paid, not only to his fine character, but also to his work as a naturalist. During his twenty-year retirement, Barnston was an active member of the Natural History Society of Canada and served as its president in 1872-3. This interest had been roused when he set off as a clerk with the Fort Langley expedition. He arrived at Fort Vancouver in 1826 and during the winter made friends with David Douglas, the renowned Scottish botanist, who was on the first of his two exploratory trips to northwestern North America. Douglas travelled extensively throughout the Columbia District and along the Pacific coast. He spent the early part of 1827 consolidating his collection before leaving for Britain on 20 March 1827 (Davies 1980:16-7). Barnston began collecting insects and keeping records for the Royal Geographic Society of London and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. He wrote many articles, among them a sketch of Douglas's travels. His eldest son, James, shared his interest and became a professor of botany at McGill University.

While at Fort Langley, Barnston went through a difficult period in his life. An intelligent man, better educated than most of his peers, he was so frustrated over low pay and lack of advancement that he became of "a gloomy disponding turn of mind," which Governor Simpson reported had led people to "have frequently been apprehensive that he would commit suicide in one of those fits" (HBCA A.34/2). Barnston was ill when he left Fort Langley and reached Fort Vancouver suffering "from the old complaint"



George Barnston

"A man of great energy of character, of high education and universally esteemed."

(Work 1829). Within the next year he took as his wife Helen Matthews, the daughter of William Matthews, one of John Jacob Astor's men, and Kilakotah, the daughter of Coboway, a Clatsop chief.<sup>1</sup> In 1831 Barnston resigned as a result of a sharp dispute with Governor Simpson and travelled east to Montreal. He never returned to the Pacific slope, but the quarrel was made up and he rejoined the Hudson's Bay Company. His happy marriage and the large family of six sons and five daughters, constant sources of comfort and interest, were important factors in enabling George Barnston to reconcile himself to life in the fur trade.<sup>2</sup>

Barnston started the post journal, kept it until 17 February 1828, and made the copy presented in this volume. He had a clear hand, and though his writing did deteriorate over time, probably because of ill health, it was always legible. He made no substantial changes, merely polishing the rough copy, which contained few errors.

We got under weigh today for Fraser's River, but the wind being from the north west, and the ebb tide setting strongly against us, we made little or no progress, and were obliged to come to an anchorage not far from the one of Friday night.

Monday 16th. The wind still unfavorable; with the morning flood we weighed Anchor & stood out into the Gulf & with change of Tide again anchored on the edge of Sturgeon Shoal. In the afternoon the same process was repeated, but we made little or nothing out of it. Shashia came on board, was received as before, and slept upon deck perfectly at ease with his new acquaintance. Scanawa who has contrived to follow us thus far was also on board, but went away in the evening.

Tuesday 17th. Another attempt was made this morning to beat up to the entrance of the Channel into Fraser's River,<sup>15</sup> but without advancing any distance, for the wind fell, and about 7 A.M. the anchor was again cast on the edge of the South Sturgeon Shoal. Captain Simpson & Mr. Annance were off twice in the Boat during the day to sound for a Channel, but returned after 9 O'clock at night without having discovered one.

Wednesday 18th. Mr. Sinclair<sup>16</sup> the first mate was sent off to sound, and upon his return reported that there was a good channel into the River, in the fair way of which two Fathoms were the least Soundings that he had.<sup>17</sup>

Thursday 19th. This morning we stood across the mouth of the Channel, and anchored on the edge of the north Shoal.<sup>18</sup> About 11 at night the vessel was discovered to be drifting, her anchor having lost hold of the steep bank on which it had been cast. The Cable was let loose with an idea that the depth of the water was still not great, and that the anchor would again catch - this however did not happen - the cable was dragged out its full length 80 or 90 Fathoms, and with difficulty checked at the end. All Hands were then called, Canadians as well as the Ship's Company to heave upon the windlass.

Friday 20th. By two O'clock in the morning the Cable was got in, and all sail was set to beat up again for the entrance of the Channel. At Break of Day it was perceived that we had drifted considerably to the Northwest. During the early part of the day we had a fresh breeze against us from the South East, but in the afternoon the wind shifted to the southward, and we succeeded before night in again anchoring near the entrance of the Channel.

Saturday 21st. We weighed anchor early, made across to the Southward till we had on the proper Bearings for entering the River; and then stood in. At 7 A.M. we got aground upon the Shoal which forms the South Side of the Channel, but luckily no damage was done. We were afloat again at Half tide about 2 in the afternoon, and as it blew a light air from the South East we anchored at 3 O'clock close to a remarkable clump of Pines<sup>19</sup> a mile up in the River on its North Bank.

Sunday 22d. Captain Simpson went down at 12 O'clock, to the north Point of Entry which he named Point Garry, and by a meridian observation<sup>20</sup>

made the Latitude about 49° 5' 30". This observation however was but an indifferent one on account of the Shoals that extended themselves to a great distance along the horizon. Mr. Sinclair was sent up the River in a boat to sound, and returned in the evening saying that he had found deep water as far as he had gone which was a considerable way up. During the afternoon the *Cadboro* was got under weigh, but as it was still uncertain how the Channel led, and the wrong side of the River being unluckily taken, we got into Shoal Water, and were obliged to return to our anchorage to await the arrival of the Sounding Party.

Monday 23d. This morning all hands were employed towing across to the other side of the River. At 3 P.M. sail was set on a Breeze springing up from the South west, and we passed the Cowitchen Villages Saumause [Somenos] Pinellahutz [Penelakuts] & Quomitzen [Quamichan]<sup>21</sup> about 6 O'clock, and anchored about a mile above them, two hundred yds. from the north Bank. Scanawa was on board all day, but went on shore at night. The Population of the Cowitchen Villages may be at a rough guess nearly 1500 Souls.

Tuesday 24th. At Half past ten in the forenoon there arose a light Breeze from the South west, and we got under weigh. At noon we passed a small village on the south side where there are two trees marked HBC, which was done by the Party under Mr. McMillan in 1824-25. The neck of Land between Birch Bay (or rather Sanch [Saanich] Bay [Boundary Bay]) and this part of the River is not above a League across. At 1/2 past one we were abreast of the north Channel or Fork which runs into the Gulf not far from Point Grey, and at 2 passed a very small village on the south side. We were opposite the Quoitle [Kwantlen] or Pitt's River<sup>22</sup> about 5 P.M. and at 1/2 past 7 P.M. anchored close to the north Bank Half a mile above Pine Island.<sup>23</sup>

Wednesday 25th. Whittlakainum<sup>24</sup> a Quoitle chief was on board this morning, and was kindly received. He traded a few Beaver Skins for Knives and then went away. The wind being extremely light, it was 11 o'Clock before the anchor weighed, after which we proceeded at a very slow rate against the current which was running pretty strong. At 2 P.M. we passed the Nanaimooch village, which at a moderate computation may contain 400 Souls. The Houses are small, but appear cleaner and more neatly constructed than those of the Cowitchen Tribe. Here a number of Canoes came off to us, containing upwards of 150 Indians, & not one woman amongst them. They occasioned us some annoyance by repeatedly and obstinately attempting to come on board, and it was not till all were under arms that they desisted from their purpose. They were urged forward by an elderly man [Punnis: see journal entry for 23 August 1827] who gave out his orders with a loud Voice, and in a very determined tone. Finding their efforts of no avail they went quietly away, and soon afterwards the vessel came to anchor.

Thursday 26th. Many natives were alongside this morning, but all were quiet & orderly. At midday we weighed anchor and hoisted sail, but as there was scarcely any wind, and a strong current in the River to stem,